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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

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19 April 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR NSCIC MEMBERS

SUBJECT: Evaluation of CIA Intelligence Publication

1. Attached is a copy of an evaluation, prepared at my request by the Intelligence Community Staff, of a CIA/OSR report on the "Evolution of Soviet Concepts and Forces for Nuclear War in Europe."

2. The IC Staff review does not attempt to pass judgment on the principal findings in the OSR paper. It is, however, an excellent case study of the contribution made by a variety of intelligence sources and methods--particularly, in this case, human source reporting--to the development of a paper on a vital topic.

3. I would welcome any comments you may have on either the OSR report or the IC Staff evaluation.


W. E. Colby

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PRD REVIEW:

of OSR/CIA Intelligence Report:

"EVOLUTION OF SOVIET CONCEPTS AND FORCES FOR NUCLEAR WAR IN EUROPE"

(SR IR 74-4, May 1974)

MARCH 1975

An evaluation prepared by the Product Review Division of
the Intelligence Community Staff at the request of the
Director of Central Intelligence

PRD will from time to time--usually upon request--issue special evaluations (Reviews) of specific finished intelligence documents which warrant more extensive treatment than can be accorded in the aperiodical publication, the Review of National Intelligence.

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Introduction

Movement in Soviet military doctrine is normally glacial in pace and circuitous in direction. It is extremely difficult for outsiders to perceive, partly for these reasons and partly because it is a matter of great delicacy and extreme sensitivity to the Soviets themselves. But move it does, and, given the critical importance of doctrine vis-a-vis the mission, posture, and development of the Soviet armed forces, it is crucial that the United States be aware of and responsive to major changes in the USSR's fundamental military precepts and objectives.

This Review examines one particular effort, a Report prepared by the Office of Strategic Research of CIA, to identify a major change in Soviet doctrine and to inform US policymakers of its significance. The Review summarizes the study's findings, traces the development of research, and assesses contributions made by various means of collection, notably the Clandestine Service of CIA.

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Summary of the Report (OSR/CIA, "Evolution of Soviet Concepts and Forces for Nuclear War in Europe"--March 1974)

In the late 1950's and through the early 1960's, the OSR Report states, Khrushchev's view that an East-West war in Europe would result in an almost immediate global nuclear exchange dominated Soviet military doctrine and dictated the character of the Soviet force structure. Highest priority was assigned to the development and deployment of theater and intercontinental strategic nuclear systems. Tactical nuclear weapons were regarded as ancillary to the strategic forces, and non-nuclear conventional forces were assigned the lowest priority.

Following Khrushchev's removal in 1964, proponents of conventional forces gained greater influence. At the same time, the United States' new concept of "flexible response" was winning greater acceptance among the members of NATO. This doctrine provided for a range of options and actions--conventional operations, limited nuclear strikes, and massive strategic attacks--the type and scale of which would depend on the nature of the Pact assault. These theories were tested in a 1964 NATO exercise and were reflected in part in Pact maneuvers the following year. By the late sixties Soviet military theoreticians apparently were convinced that a war in Europe would begin with some period of conventional conflict. This shift in views concerning the nature of initial hostilities may have helped to accelerate the modernization of Soviet conventional forces.

While thus conceding that the initial phase of conflict might be conventional, the Soviets, throughout the late sixties, persisted in the belief that a war in Europe would soon escalate to the use of nuclear weapons. This view was based on the Soviet assessment that NATO would be unable to contain or overcome Pact forces by conventional means alone. Citing NATO exercises, the Soviets identified a consistent pattern of NATO's resorting to the use of nuclear weapons whenever a Pact breakthrough with conventional forces was threatened. Then, either in response to NATO's use of nuclear weapons, or to preempt such use, Soviet doctrine called for a massive and decisive theater-wide nuclear strike.

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But at least since 1970, evidence has accumulated that the Soviets are increasingly accepting, and even planning for, nuclear options which would enable them to limit both the intensity and the scope of a general European conflict. Senior Soviet Officers have theorized that the use of nuclear weapons might take a variety of forms, ranging from the firing of only a few tactical rockets, through larger strikes by frontal systems, to the participation of USSR-based strike forces. These views have emphasized the need for flexibility in Soviet doctrine and capabilities. Subsequent staff and field exercises have indicated that the Soviets are indeed seeking such flexibility.

The Report concludes that these developments in Soviet forces and strategic planning suggest that the USSR is attempting a more flexible posture for nuclear contingencies in Europe. This growing flexibility includes options for the selective use of tactical nuclear forces in Eastern Europe as an alternative to exclusive reliance on massive strikes delivered primarily by USSR-based strategic systems.

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The Review: Substantive Background

Much has been written about the Soviet military and the doctrine or perceptions which would determine its use. Indeed, no other issue has generated as many requirements for the Intelligence Community nor had as much influence in focusing the efforts and products of the member agencies. But, of all the studies, memoranda, and estimates on this subject, the CIA/OSR Report must rank among the most significant in its treatment of an issue of critical importance to the United States and its European Allies. The paper does more than merely fulfill the title's promise to trace the evolution of Soviet concepts and forces for nuclear war in Europe. It also provides the rationale for US policymakers to reconsider their own options in a changing nuclear environment.

Clearly, this achievement was not easily accomplished. The Report was developed over a period of many months and required the collection, collation, analysis, and reanalysis of a plethora of information. Particularly noteworthy was the manner in which the analysts integrated and applied information from a variety of sources-some of it on hand for more than a decade, some acquired only shortly before publication.

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